An account of an Epidemic Fever,

as it appeared in Adams County in 1823;
being an

Inaugural Dissertation
for the

Degree of Doctor of Medicine.
by

Passed March 24
1824
W. R. H
Dean.

Alexander Speer
of
Pennsylvania

Introduction

The general importance attached to every epidemic, the extensive ravages committed by the one which has so recently pervaded our country and particularly the universal dominion it attained and exerted over Gettysburg and its vicinity, during the last three years whilst I was a student of Medicine, claims a right to my inaugural essay. I pretend not to enlarge the bounds of medical science or shed new light on the paths of philosophical inquiry, by developing its causes, displaying any new laws or proclaiming any specific method of treatment, nor shall I even attempt the more humble task of recording its history from its inception as a simple intermittent in 1821, nor trace its varying forms through continued, remittent and dysenteric in 1822, but be confined to the observations I was enabled to make during the last year. I will however premise, that its localities were the same in each year, that is,

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the particular districts of country in which it appeared the first year were its theatre in all; and those situations which were exempt the first season, were equally fortunate in the succeeding ones with the exception of one, which, although severely suffering during the winter, was wholly exempt during the warmer months

An account &c.

The weather during the months of April and May was very cool with the exception of a few warm days. A great quantity of rain fell out during these months, owing to which, and to the coldness of the weather the farmers were unusually late in putting in their spring crops. Frosts were also very common, insomuch that fruit of almost every description failed. In June and July the weather became more moderate and pleasant. There were also considerable quantities of rain during these months, frequent showers alternated by warm sunshine. This was what is popularly termed very "seasonable weather," promising to agriculturists the most abundant crops. Nor were they disappointed in their expectations; vegetation of every kind flourished most luxuriantly. During this time we had some thunderstorms in which the lightning was remarkably vivid, followed in quick succession by most tremendous peals of thunder. About the

middle of August the weather set in warm, and continued warm and dry until the 8th of September, when the rainy weather commenced. It continued cloudy and rained less or more almost every day until the 20th when it cleared up cool and was succeeded by cool mornings and evenings with sharp white frosts

In May and June our country was almost free of any disease except a few cases of intermittents, (mostly mild tertians) which were then supposed either to be sporadic cases or relapses; the disease being chiefly confined to those who had laboured under it during the preceding autumn. In July the cases of intermittents of the tertian form became more numerous and many cases of quotidian intermittents, remittent and continued fever appeared violent in their symptoms bearing the use of the lancet to a considerable extent. In this month we had several cases of bilious colic, and one of dysentery which required for its cure, two copious bleedings, an antimonial emetic and a number of mercurial and saline purges.

[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] in other [illegible] a [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] impossible [illegible] [illegible] other side [illegible] the [illegible] head. [illegible] [illegible] was [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible]. In [illegible], the child was so slight [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] experienced a [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] spine [illegible] [illegible] is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] prevent the attack of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] necessitated him against dishes, but [illegible] [illegible] the appetite remained unimpaired and [illegible] [illegible] voracious than natural. In such, the case [illegible] [illegible] more obstinate and difficult of cure than those in which the stomach did not call for an [illegible] of [illegible] and other strong food.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] to expect [illegible]
[illegible] commencement. The [illegible]
[illegible] stated for five [illegible] exacerbations [illegible] call for
medical aid [illegible]

While [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible]
[illegible] with [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] Some children will [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] a third and [illegible] dispatch; [illegible] later in
[illegible] age [illegible] had been [illegible] adolescent [illegible] Go
a claim, expressed in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]

In the exacerbation patient complained of great thirst
[illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] mouth [illegible] in the throat [illegible]
and [illegible] [illegible] neck. Some
[illegible] the whole body [illegible] to the [illegible]
that the patient [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
it. In others the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the

scalp. The pain in [illegible] especially [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The face was flushed and the eyes red; and sometimes from the commencement, but frequently from the third or fourth day of the disease, the adnata of the eye was tinged with a yellow color. The tongue in some cases was thickly coated with a white fur, but generally with a yellow coat and again it had the appearance of being thickened with [illegible]. In a few cases the tongue was clean and of a bright red color and had a granulated [illegible] appearance.

The respiration was hurried and laborious, with in many cases, the sensation of a great weight and oppression about the praecordia. The skin was dry, hot and parched, and frequently tinged with bile, especially about the third or fourth day of the disease. In other cases the yellowness of the skin continued in those cases after convalescence took place. The urine was sparingly voided and high coloured. The bowels were generally bound, but

the disease [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and continuing [illegible]. The fever in the early part of the season, that is, during the [illegible] of July and part of August was bilious, remittent and [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]. In the latter end of August and in September the fever [illegible] changed more or a typhoid character; it was more frequent, quick, soft and small, or oppressed until the 20th of September when the weather became cool and the fever [illegible] appearance it again became more inflammatory.

The remission was marked by an alleviation of most of the preceding symptoms, by a diminution of the heat of the body and by a gentle diaphoresis breaking out first on the forehead and afterwards over the whole body. Sometimes, on the third or fourth day of the disease an eruption or efflorescence appeared on the skin. This was a variable symptom.

I shall now proceed to notice the treatment, which, in the hands of a physician of ordinary [illegible] or [illegible]

much esteemed preceptor Dr. J. H. Miller, from a
[illegible]

[illegible] the disease was complete in
a regular intermittent form, [illegible] it
[illegible] promptly administered and [illegible] not
collapse, [illegible] [illegible] in about [illegible] the
[illegible] interval, as was not generally the case, nor
was not solicited before the disease was [illegible] and
well established, if the patient was [illegible] cold,
dull, hard pulse, redness of the [illegible] and [illegible] pain
in the head; blood-letting was employed with the [illegible]
[illegible] advantage. Other [illegible] were simple and to an
extent sufficient to afford relief [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] if sunstroke were induced, it proved the most effec-
tual and other remedy in producing a crisis to the
disease, or in changing it from a remittent to an in-
termittent form. The operation was mostly followed
by a termination of the paroxysm and by a gentle diu-
[illegible] breaking out over the whole body. It also by
equalizing the excretion and consequently diminishing the

[illegible] certain and [illegible] of the [illegible], to mitigate the [illegible] of the succeeding [illegible].

[illegible] operation of [illegible] evident advantage: [illegible] under the [illegible] of the [illegible] first [illegible] be [illegible] that state of extreme debility, which is sometimes [illegible] in the [illegible] under the commencement the [illegible] to the disease to [illegible] character.

[illegible] clear [illegible] the patient [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

the latter [illegible]

[illegible] or [illegible]

the bulk of the medicine [illegible]

[illegible] especially [illegible]

[illegible] the stomach. [illegible]

[illegible] against [illegible]

[illegible] Given in the [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] such a dual [illegible]

[illegible] was [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] appeared to be [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] substituted. In some cases [illegible]

[illegible] other a [illegible] character [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] difficult to get medicine [illegible] Given these specific [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] passed the threshold [illegible]

[illegible] allowing [illegible] tablets, [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] a [illegible]

[illegible] of the [illegible]

was [illegible] times [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] Tinctures [illegible] [illegible]

was also generally [illegible] [illegible]

Tonics were prescribed according [illegible]

were made and a complete intermission obtained. It may be proper to remark here that in many cases in which the [illegible] taken by patients without the necessary evacuations being premised they were the cause of changing the disease from an intermittent to a remittent form. A variety of this class of medicines were employed but the chief reliance was placed in the Cort. Peruv. This was given either in substance decoction &c according to the state of the stomach which was to receive it. The following Cinchona in many cases in which the [illegible] was used was as follows. Prescribed ℞ Cinch. ℥ss. Serpt. rad. ℥i. Sal. ℥j. Aqua fl. pinte. mi. One to be taken [illegible] times a day. The

Sulph. Quinine was also employed in a number of cases. This of all other remedies was prescribed with the greatest certainty of success. It appeared to operate like a charm in the cure of intermittents. In no case was more than from six to twelve grs necessary for a cure. Various other tonics were employed and with decided advantage. A combination of Gentian, Columbo, Serpt., Rheubarb, Sal Tartar and Cortex Aurant. given in decoction appeared to agree with the stomach in weak and irritable state of that organ much better than the barks. Dr. Miller informs me that in a number of cases he has given the Carb. Magnesia with a most happy effect in the treatment of this complaint. He gave it in doses of a tea spoonful every hour or two, during both the intermission and paroxysm.

To guard against a relapse, it was necessary strictly to attend to the ordinary means recommended for that purpose, such as enjoining a due regulation of diet and avoiding exposure to cold and moisture and night-air. Yet notwithstanding every precaution they

were by no means uncommon.